

THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

IV, No. 2

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS: PHILADELPHIA

February, 1942

Suggestions Wanted

Professor George F. Reynolds, chairman of the committee to plan for the publication of an anthology of democracy, is very anxious to receive at once suggestions concerning the proposed volume. His address is University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.

The committee is considering an anthology of not more than 50,000 words, to be made almost entirely of imaginative material—stories, plays, scenes from plays—rather than documents or argumentative speeches. The selections must necessarily be of a kind and should be of a kind which, though taught simply in literature, will effectively communicate democratic ideas.

Comments on this plan will be appreciated by the committee and also suggestions as to title as well as contents, especially if they arrive before March 1.

Big Megatomes!

One, and another, and another. Each one more ponderous than the last. How long can this go on?

There is a book of a thousand pages, an "omnibus" for freshmen, which would travel far more gaily than a megatome. And here is a college "text" of 1,350 pages, also designed for freshmen. Can freshmen survive through the desert of all their nourishment in this time?

Do the sophomores equal burden each new volume for the surplus is made more comprehensive than the last. Two thousand pages, and you may have it in one or two volumes. If I see it, let me have it in four. Editions of American literature run to 1,500 pages or worse. Is it possible there can be so much that—really good stuff, the time that careful analysis and discussion should consume? That there is such quantity, that to require the student to read all? His education, we hope, to end with college. If he reads his authors leisurely, reads in a few, will he not more of his own accord go on to enlarge his acquaintance with them and find his way among new authors—provided he have any inclination for his further education?

Several hundred authors in one semester—little snippets from minor authors and larger ones from major ones, hurriedly read—may be warranted to result in indigestion, nausea.

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Insistent Voices in Rebuttal

Well Then, Why Teach Physics?

Professor Sloane's sprightly and provocative "Why Teach Advanced Composition?" in the December NEWS LETTER opens the way for a series of "why's" equally cogent. Why teach physics? Not one student in thousands becomes a practicing physicist. Why bother with mathematics for undergraduates who as adults will never again so much as extract a cube root? Why provide instruction in music for any except prospective concert performers, or in drawing except for prospective artists?

At the university where I am placed, the School of Engineering requires of all its major students an advanced course in exposition—and this though, as their instructors can testify, engineers in the making seem frequently to have little enough to say. The School of Speech and Drama demands a course in argumentation, though surely its graduates might be expected to use the spoken rather than the written word. Enough other schools and departments impose the same or similar requirements to suggest that if it is Professor Sloane who is in step, then most of the regiment he marches with are out.

Perhaps, however, Professor Sloane considers no course an advanced composition course unless it deals with imaginative writing—just as many people consider "art" only that which has to do with paint. If so, and if such courses are, as he assumes, of value only when they provide the student with the *kudos* attached to publication or add in present or in future to his income, then certainly they have no place in the undergraduate curriculum—or anywhere else for that matter. But are the values so assumed the only or the important ones in student writing? It seems a little late in the day to be refurbishing the arguments in favor of efforts at artistic expression *per se*, but let us consider for a moment some other classes housed inside college walls. Drawing, almost everybody admits, is a means of sharpening and refining observation. The struggle to sing or to master a musical instrument, even the unsuccessful struggle, frequently opens to the struggler fields of musical appreciation otherwise closed. Dancing—is it taught only that dancers may sell their skill? I doubt it.

What, then, of imaginative writing? Well, first, it is a potent aid in the development of literary appreciation; this has been demonstrated so often that no re-demon-

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Is Salable Stuff the Only Goal?

When asking the question "Why Teach Advanced Composition?" in the December NEWS LETTER, William Sloane leaves the impression that advanced composition consists of "short story, drama, or the radio broadcast." Those, as advanced composition, I agree, are useful to very few students; but I heartily disagree with the implication of his general article: that at the very beginning of the college course is the only place to teach the fundamentals of clear thinking and writing. I know of no other art whose technique the novice is expected to complete "at the very beginning." The pianist, the painter, the chemist, the machinist—well, what department does not insist on improved techniques in advanced years in college?

Professor Sloane suggests that "if our advanced composition courses are doing anything at all, they are teaching a skill rarely used to produce anything worth producing." If he means by this that more trash than good literature is published today, I agree: if he means that student writings are not worth production, I fear that the fault lies too much with the teacher. Even if his statement is true, I believe that it begs the question.

Part of us can teach part of composition all of the time; most of us can teach most of composition part of the time; I hope that somewhere there is at least one of us who can teach all of composition all of the time. I sometimes find, much to my embarrassment, that an unsatisfactory student paper is more my fault than his.

I once heard a piano teacher say to an advanced student: "You are beginning to like to play with the keys," when the student caressed a key as he held it down. Only when a student has become self-critical to the point of "caressing words" and has achieved a "feeling" for words is he ready to go on in the use of his language.

I agree that most undergraduates are not likely to become Shakespeares; I agree that most freshmen are not likely to sprout "feeling" for good use of English; I agree that most freshmen probably have not many good ideas, but I insist that college students who do not express themselves in clear, concise, specific English by the end of their freshman year should do further supervised writing. All students who expect to teach should take advanced composition courses. And I do not mean courses in professional writing even though that may have its place. There is a pos-

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Postscript to the Convention—A Letter From President Lowry

Dear Mr. Johnson:

You think I should write a letter saying part of what I said at Indianapolis at the annual dinner of the CEA, where my chief office, I still think, was the reading of Professor Foerster's classic address. I am glad to comply with your request, if for no other reason than to acknowledge, with real appreciation, the privilege you have given me of serving as president of our excellent little society for the coming year.

Most teachers of English must surely feel as I do—that they have enough of organizations and need, perhaps above all else, simply more time to read. In spite of any such feeling, I think the CEA has a claim upon us as a group deserving and fully rewarding the support it may receive in our colleges. I can at least suggest my own faith in it.

First of all, I have been happy to find no disposition on the part of our members to undervalue real research or to dispute the claim of research as the seasoner and informing agent of much good teaching. There is nothing worse than inspired teaching that isn't true. In none of our discussions have I heard it suggested that vague charms such as "personality," "devotion to the young," and any form of mere facility could take the place of solid knowledge and decent curiosity. Most of us seem to know that the search for our fact or new relationship made today—and made perhaps without any tangible success—is often the life-giving element in the teaching we do tomorrow on some entirely different matter. The scholar and the teacher are very frequently the same person, to the glory of both scholarship and teaching. I am glad that the CEA thinks this is so.

Such belief does not, however, make less keen the central conviction that members of the CEA share—the plain sense that the teaching of undergraduates is still a vital vocation for most of us, a vocation worthy of our best efforts, of our best exchange of ideas and experience, of at least one day's attention at the annual meeting of our profession, and of the assumption that the business of the teacher is something more than a rumor or a nuisance.

I like the informal spirit of our organization, a spirit reflected in THE NEWS LETTER and in the unusually lively and instructive discussions we heard at Indianapolis. For my own part, I hope—you may not agree—that we have few committees and few "causes." Our

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THE NEWS LETTER

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Published 8 Times a Year by the
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PENNSYLVANIA PRESS

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Membership in the College English Association, including THE NEWS LETTER, \$2.00 a year. Subscription for Non-Members and Libraries, \$1.50.

Brief and to the Point

This little periodical is so light in quantity and so informal in quality that it is not justified in talking too much about itself. There is, on the whole, so little to talk about!

But we should like to repeat for the nth time that our limitation in size makes concise contributions not only desirable, but essential. The editors have set a limit of 1,000 words, and they urge that a great deal can be said within such a limit. Moreover, our membership evidently applauds such a ruling. Longer articles would require a larger page and soon we should see ourselves just another educational magazine, struggling to print something of outstanding interest as a feature for each issue, and filling the wide-open spaces of white paper with reprints of lectures delivered before educational gatherings.

There must be a place for such periodicals or they would not be manufactured in such numbers; but THE NEWS LETTER does not compete. It is an exchange of ideas and experiences and suggestions among the members of a compact organization, all engaged in the same business and facing common problems. By contributing your questions or your notions briefly and informally and often, you widen your own acquaintanceship among your colleagues, and that alone is sufficient justification for writing.

So please stop sending the editor treatises two or three thousand words in length, and send him instead a succession of letters at comfortable intervals, each containing a stimulating idea or a bit of friendly controversy. And don't forget that news as well as opinion is worth while.

Reason and Emotion

Scientific discovery results from reasoning power; the fine arts are the achievements of man's disciplined emotions. This simple classification is satisfactory, so far as it goes. So at this moment in our world's history, when it seems that civilization itself can be saved only by scientific engines and practical achievement, even educators are asserting that the arts must be set aside for a time, and all training of the young be focused upon science and reasoning "practically applied."

But if those who reshape our college curricula would think a little further, they would have to admit that pure reason continues to be the handmaid of emotion, even in a world at war. Proofs of this are close at hand. Our nation was broken into fragments by discussion and dispute, and reason was unable to crystallize into action, until Pearl Harbor stirred men's feelings, and emotion alone united again our scattered parts.

Reason was never powerful enough to start a war, or to end one. Reason has never been able to bear fruit of great accomplishment until emotion said the word. Every scientific discovery, so glibly attributed to reasoning power, has been persistently sought because of an emotional objective, such as comfort or happiness; and imagination has been one of its parents.

If these statements be true, then all of those studies which help young people to define the emotions, to appraise their expression, to cultivate imagination, and to discipline their own emotional impulses should be emphasized at such a time as this rather than subordinated.

Training in appreciation, training in expression—these terms are so trite, so conventional, so superficially considered, that we easily overlook their real depth and breadth of meaning and, in fact, their very practical importance at this moment.

The shortage of good paper has made some student compositions doubly sleazy. Heretofore only what was written was flimsy.

Dear Editor:

I have put in twenty years of my life trying not to confuse Gelett Burgess and Burgess Johnson. Now comes Chap Book number II!

W. L. W.

And so the confounded confusion continues!—Ed.

Notice

The two Chap Books issued as supplements to THE NEWS LETTER—"A Certain Sort of Interest in Language," by I. A. Richards, and "Short Words are Words of Might," by Gelett Burgess, may be had at ten cents a copy so long as the supply lasts. Both may be found useful in the classroom.

A Little More Starch

"Why Teach Physics?" Miss Mirrieles' question, asked elsewhere in this issue of THE NEWS LETTER, reminds us all too pointedly that that question is being asked by swarms of educational administrators and similar gentry—and with them it is purely rhetorical. There is no need to teach physics save to prospective engineers or perhaps, since the medical schools will demand it, to prospective doctors. And the mathematics pre-requisite to physics is also out. Science in the schools should consist of enough arithmetic to balance one's check book and make change, of enough chemistry and physics to get the drift of a popular article or perhaps to recognize that the man with the white coat in the advertisement is looking through a microscope. Little fortification in that for the curriculum—and, we venture, for the students' minds!

Miss Mirrieles' question also reminds us of William Smith, D.D., first provost of the University of Pennsylvania and also professor of both rhetoric and natural philosophy, who held the opinion that all undergraduates should study natural philosophy—and study it before they tackled composition. The result, he said, would be more perspicuity in writing.

Probably none of today's English teachers will go all the way with the late reverend gentleman, but many of them will agree that training in exact sciences would be beneficial. For in such sciences exact quantities of exactly the same thing must equate exactly and not be mere careless approximations; and that kind of work might be helpful to our students, many of whom write sentences and paragraphs and whole compositions that add up to nothing at all or at best to nothing very precise.

Professors of Education (capital E, please), who when last heard of were still hard at work taking all the starch out of the curriculum, must be a bit chagrined to learn from Admiral Nimitz that hardly any college students now have sufficient mathematical training to qualify merely to study for naval commissions. Perhaps now would be a good time for English teachers to join with teachers of science in getting in a few licks at those theorizers who wish all education to be motivated to the degree of complete emasculation.

Code

After the preceding had been written, we came across the following in the *Bulletin* of the New England Modern Language Association. The resolution was passed at the last annual meeting of that organization.

"WHEREAS, the American Youth Commission has sponsored the publication of a pamphlet entitled 'What the High Schools Ought to Teach,' prepared by a committee of ten consisting solely of professors of education and educational administrators and containing not a single teacher of the high school subjects; and

"WHEREAS, the said pamphlet devotes, out of a total of thirty-six

pages, merely two and one-third pages to a 'Criticism of the Conventional Subjects' (that is, English, Mathematics, Foreign Languages, History, Natural Sciences) plus one page to a discussion of the 'Vicious Aspects of the Ninth Grade' (that is, the teaching of English Composition, Algebra, Foreign Language, Science, History); the said three and one-third pages constituting a condemnation in toto of current college preparatory curricula and teaching methods; and

"WHEREAS, the authors of the said pamphlet have accepted the currently all too prevalent defeatist attitude that certain subjects are commonly regarded as very difficult and are sure to discourage pupils who are not 'academically minded,' making such suggestions for 'improvement' as the following: 'Why not serve directly, through a course in general language, the chief needs which are presented by advocates of foreign languages, without attempting to secure that slender and doubtful degree of mastery that is the only outcome for most pupils of the present courses in these languages?'; now therefore be it

"Resolved, that The New England Modern Language Association protests the effort of specialists in educational theory and administration to bring into disrepute the so-called 'conventional subjects'; and be it further

"Resolved, that this Association affirms the value, at present as in the past, of the study of foreign languages and other 'conventional' high school subjects which demand from the pupils the acquisition of exact knowledge."

And as we went to press, the mail brought still another document, this one from the *French Review*, December, 1941. It is by A. M. Withers, Concord State Teachers College.

"The consummation of a general prescription of foreign languages for all English majors everywhere, actively sponsored by them (not alone at M. L. A. meetings), would not unsettle the educational scheme to the detriment of any group, but would give to departments of English a better prepared and more enthusiastic body of students, and would add to foreign-language study that part of the student clientele which can help it most. For a student is almost never ideally interested in English without knowledge of Latin, French or German; and vice versa. This is no dogma, but the settled conviction of all the recognized best in the English-teaching profession. On the other hand, I am wandering from the truth, for others see it, I wish that an English professor, some time, somewhere, would proclaim in print that these things are not so. I should like this case relish far more contradiction than the present manifestations of indifference. In any event, this is a polite challenge, issued to brothers-in-arms."

Attention, Please!

Very frequently a piece of news that should be printed at once arrives in Philadelphia just after THE NEWS LETTER has gone to press. It is unfortunate that such items must be omitted, for they are especially desirable.

Unless accidents, illness, or other unforeseeable causes for delay occur, everything is in the hands of the printer on the first of the month. Which means that if contributions are to appear in a particular issue they must reach Philadelphia a day or two before. Therefore, if you have any news items (reports of regional meetings, of the doings of committees, and the like), get them off promptly. This also applies to letters that contain your more or less indignant replies to something that has just appeared in THE NEWS LETTER. This month rather than next is the time for a riposte.

Why Teach Physics?

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stration is needed. Second, fiction writing at least calls for repeated efforts at relating cause to effect, efforts no less strenuous than those demanded by logic. Writing a story is a severe thinking process, not merely a feeling one. The only people who need proof of this are people who have written no stories.

Third, and important enough to rate its separate paragraph, imaginative writing is an especially effective means of opening the writer's eyes to life. Professor Sloane complains that students who have nothing to say fill our composition classes. Amen!—but why have they nothing to say? By the time a second or third or fourth year in college is reached, most of them have been exposed to a succession of those "courses in history, philosophy, music, and the classics" in which Professor Sloane puts his trust. All of them have lived intimately in families; shared the community life of the schools; known people good, bad, and indifferent; experienced some of the primary emotions and many of the derived ones. If they still look flat-eyed at their own existences, it is perhaps because thus far they have been almost altogether receiving instructions, not sending ones. Trying to set an emotion in words, trying to forecast the actions to be expected in a given situation from an individual of given antecedents—these are attempts which, seriously pursued under rigorous instructional demand, increase the student's chance of understanding both what he sees around him and what he finds inside. Put narrowly, he learns to read history, whether that of Pompey or of John Jones, meat vendor. To the extent that he does learn, his attitudes toward himself and others are favorably affected, and his chance of finally becoming adult, not passing out from college a perpetual sophomore, is by that much increased.

But like any other class, the worth of a writing class depends on how it is conducted. Taught by an instructor scornful of the task or muddle-headed about what the task is; taught by one whose own writing consists of three pages of an unfinished story and a huddle of feeble, unpublished verses—by one, that is, who has never himself submitted to the discipline he would impose on his students—then undoubtedly courses in advanced composition are worthless. So, equally undoubtedly, is any other class equally ill taught.

Edith R. Mirrieles,
Stanford University

Is Salable Stuff the Only Goal?

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sibility, of course, that not every college professor who must conduct composition classes can teach composition.

Had our predecessors demanded a higher quality of self-expression from students preparing to teach in high school, we would have far less reason to dread freshman English. For the good of our successors, if for no other, we should encourage more exact composition.

We college professors fondly hope and often tell college students that they will become leaders; a leader who can write effectively can lead more widely.

It may well be that part of our duty as English teachers is to assist students to find ideas and knowledge, but doing that will not harm us either. That in itself may be one of the important functions of a college course in advanced composition.

Wendell M. Burditt,
Alfred University

These Megatomes!

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The megatome implies either that the instructor is not competent to direct the student's reading, or that it is not worth while for students to learn to use the library. Perhaps the megatome also implies that students be compelled to buy and carry around three or four times as much material as they are expected to use.

And now here's another, a megatome for little children, 857 pages of story and verse. The whole store of children's literature ransacked—Mother Goose rhymes, poems, fairy tales, travel, adventure, nonsense, folk tales fables, myths, legends—all crammed into one volume. It is a little strange that in this great collection there should be but one Bible story, and that the one caustically ridiculed by Elmer Davis in his novel "Giant Killer."

It is doubtless necessary that certain books be bulky; but we hold with Dr. Johnson that the most useful books are those we may carry to the fireside and hold readily in the hand. The anticipated shortage of raw materials for the making of paper may now prove to be a blessing in disguise.

A. L. Phillips
Teachers College
Mayville, North Dakota

No Regimentation

After all, the teacher of literature is an artist and should be encouraged to teach in his own way, and that college department is strongest which offers a considerable variety in method. Our colleges need men like Phelps and Copeland as well as men like Manly and Kittredge. Whether the instructor stresses what seems to him to be fact, truth, or form is not important so long as the student is sensitively exposed to the literature itself.

In growing humility before the uncertainties of fact, the elusiveness of truth and the mysteries of form, I find myself more and more falling back upon the Written Word. If it is a Shakespeare course, we read the plays, not once, but two or three times. Certain passages we hear in the classroom: read by the instructor to illustrate a comment, given from memory by a student, or presented on the phonograph to suggest how the great actors have interpreted the lines. If it is a course in lyric poetry, we memorize a good number of short poems for oral presentation, repetitively throughout the term, in the classroom. Thus certain distinguished passages tend to become familiar, and to linger in the student's mind long after the instructor's even more spectacular pronouncements have faded.

If this is unscholarly or "irresponsible," make the most of it.

Frank Prentice Rand,
Amherst College

Echoes of the Convention

"We guard the main channel through which man's highest hopes have come down to us."

"Now that we know there are some eternal values, we can all relax."

"Indexes reflect the strong points and the weak points of their editors."

"Educators speak contemptuously of mere knowledge, mere literature, even mere literacy."

"Shakespeare's aim was gain, and not glory."

"We must so present democracy that it makes a dynamic appeal."

"Any free and noble utterance that emphasizes the dignity of man, social justice, or brotherhood is a living voice in the great chorus of democracy."

"All an artist needs is a little view of life that he can distort convincingly."

"The realist accepts limitations, but the romanticist is challenged by such limits to his ego."

Dickens: "Our friends fall all around us as we attain middle age. Oh what a field of battle it is!"

"The imagination is a means of passing through fiction to truth."

"There is no such thing as realism and romanticism—only good art and bad art."

There is more ado to interpret the things, and more books upon books than upon all other subjects; we do nothing but comment upon one another.—Montaigne.

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364 pages

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Turntable

The Poet's Own Voice

1941's most ambitious commercial release of a modern poet reading his own poetry is Decca's album 273, "Carl Sandburg in a Recital from His Book 'The People, Yes.'"

This album illustrates how recorded poetry should be prepared and marketed. Sandburg's well-known affirmation of faith in democracy, published in 1936, is our faith of 1942. The author selects passages from the hundred odd sections of the poem and groups them under his three headings, "Prejudice," "Proverbs," and "The People Speak," making a unified "recital" which covers three double twelve-inch records. A few variant readings may trouble scholars in years to come.

Among Harvard University releases of the past year, Robinson Jeffers' reading from "The Tower beyond Tragedy" may be selected as exemplifying the same excellent abbreviation of a long poem which has been noted in the Sandburg album. On one double twelve-inch record Mr. Jeffers reads 11, 61-74, 86-123, 233-244, and 247-259, lines that constitute an artistic whole. Following a short description of Clytemnestra as she appears before the men of Mycenae immediately after the murder of Agamemnon, there comes a great dramatic monologue, in which the Queen announces her motives and describes the crime. All references to Cassandra are deleted. In effect a new, more brief and possibly more intense poem has been created in this recording. Mr. Jeffers reads his lines excellently.

Harvard record P-1050, Mr. Jeffers' reading of "To the Stone Cutters" (again with interesting variants) and seven other short poems, is like the Sandburg album in its timeliness. The second side of this twelve-inch disc contains, for instance, "Watch the Lights Fade," "The Bloody Sire" ("Violence the bloody sire of all the world values"), and section 7 from "The Truce and the Peace."

Harvard offers a third twelve-inch record of Jeffers reading "Shane O'Neill's Cairn" and some five other poems which should be included in every library of recorded modern poetry.

Two other Harvard releases of the past year are too good to be passed over. One (P-1044) contains John Gould Fletcher's spirited reading of his "Clipper Ships," and the other (P-1052) W. H. Auden's "Spring in Wartime," and five other short poems of extraordinary power and contemporary significance.

The Beggar's Opera

An excellent album has been issued by Victor which will be of interest to every instructor who has occasion to teach 18th-century literature and who is concerned with aiding his students in their appreciation of that era.

Almost forty songs from John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, sung by an English company and following the successful new version of the 1920 revival at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, are obtainable in album M-722 on six twelve-inch rec-

Postscript to the Convention

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cause, as I see it, is simply to be what we are—teachers of English, friendly with and helpful to one another, open to new ideas and other men's ways of doing things, greedy for exchange of opinion, hint, and suggestion. If we behave thus normally, with some liveliness and good intention, it is just possible that college administrators may be enheartened and instructed by our goings on. They may come, sooner than we think, to regard us as teachers and not merely as compilers of books and articles for the enrichment of trustees' reports and of the university's greatness-by-pagination, as a too-sour colleague in our profession once was moved to put it. We can still honor the books and the articles, the good and sincere among them. We shall have time even to try our hand at writing some of them, if we choose. But whatever our other activity, our obligation is to hold steadily before the academic world the vocation of the teacher—a vocation to which much lip-service and too little of anything else has been paid by those in authority and power.

As your new president, I should like to ask our members to help the cause in every way they can. Many of our number will, in the uncommon days ahead, have to think of matters far removed from the teaching of English and to rub their eyes occasionally to believe that the world still allows the teaching of English at all. Yet even they may find an odd moment to write something to THE NEWS LETTER. Even a two-line suggestion about a book or an experience in the classroom may help somebody else. And I hope our members may make it their business to invite to membership in the CEA the colleagues they like best. We can stand some more good company. May I also suggest that they occasionally show THE NEWS LETTER to some administrator likely to understand our desire to make the teaching of English the service of the living as well as the resuscitation of the dead?

The officers—and here I know you agree—will welcome ideas for improving THE NEWS LETTER, the annual or sectional meetings, and our other activities. We shall—at least your new president shall—be rather hard to persuade about new "projects" or "crusades." But tell us what you have to propose. That we are open-minded in these matters is demonstrated perhaps by the formation of Professor Reynolds' new committee mentioned elsewhere in these pages.

Sincerely yours,
Howard Lowry,
Princeton University

ords. Frederic Austin has retained the intrinsic qualities of the original music, and all the better known airs are included. The accompanying brochure adequately elucidates the musical significance of the 1728 production.

However, for class use, if the lyrics are to be understood, copies of the text are indispensable.

H. O. Werner,
Washington College

The Aims of the English Department

When education in all fields is being asked with some skepticism, to justify its purposes, perhaps one more definition, however obvious, may not be out of place.

The aims of an English Department are readily divided between its purposes in the field of expression and in the field of reading. Its aims in each of these fields are, primarily, two: an elementary aim, and a more advanced one.

I) "Expression" is used to include both writing and speaking.

A) The basic aim in this field is reasonably correct and clear expression of the thoughts of the writer or speaker. On this level, English is a tool subject, essential to all other subjects and useful in all occupations.

B) Above this first purpose lies the aim of skilled and effective expression. This may range all the way from merely arresting and forceful presentation to the higher levels of literary art. Obviously it is always desirable, as far as it can be attained.

II) The aims in reading are similarly divided.

A) Essential as a tool skill in all other studies, and in all walks of life, is the ability to read understandingly the prose in which human affairs—social, scientific, and political—are treated. Among other things this demands a wide vocabulary. Since the subjects of such prose are so varied, and often so demanding, there are no definite bounds to this aim.

B) Above this, and more difficult still to teach or to attain, is the aim of understanding and appreciating literary art. This purpose is one with the purpose of the study of all arts—enrichment of life—the discovery, in Huxley's words, of "a serene resting-place for worn human nature." It is on a level with love of music or painting, and, offering opportunity for enjoyment to every type of mind, it tends to lift the spirit above immediate disturbance into a sense of security.

III) Considered broadly as a field of study, English literature suggests at once two additional considerations.

A) It may be thought of as the permanent record of the mind of the race. In this respect it is comparable to history, and indeed inseparable from it. So considered, it might be argued that it contains most of the elements of a liberal education.

B) It may be thought of as a specialized field of scholarship, offering extremely varied fields of investigation. Any liberal arts college that hopes to maintain a creditable reputation among universities must give properly qualified undergraduates opportunity for training adequate to prepare for such advanced graduate work.

With the exception of preparation for specialized scholarship, all these aims fit into any general purpose of education.

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